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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, EAP/EP, OES/EGC, OES/STC
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR ANE, G/ENV, EGAT/ESP (CHIP BARBER)
STATE PASS TO EPA/OIA (DENNIS CUNNINGHAM AND MARK KASMAN)
STATE PASS TO NOAA/NOS/OIA (JONATHAN JUSTI)
USDA FOR FOREST SERVICE/INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS (CYNTHIA MACKIE AND
KELLI YOUNG)
BANGKOK PASS TO RDMA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [ENRG](#) [ECON](#) [KGHG](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: VIETNAM REQUESTS ENVIRONMENTAL DELIVERABLES FOR UPCOMING
PRIME MINISTER VISIT

Ref: A. Hanoi 108 B. 07 Hanoi 2053 C. 07 Hanoi 1869 D. Hanoi 537

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In separate meetings, the Minister and Senior Vice-Minister of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) detailed to the Ambassador priority issues for the Government of Vietnam (GVN) during the upcoming visit to Washington by Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung. Both officials highlighted climate change as the single most important environmental topic that Vietnam wants to address and suggested several focused deliverables. In particular, the GVN enthusiastically supports the creation of a new U.S.-Vietnam committee on climate change, albeit at a low level with regard to USG leadership and OES commitment. End Summary.

Climate Change Is a Top GVN Priority for PM Visit

¶2. (SBU) At the direction of the Prime Minister, MONRE Minister Nguyen Khoi Pham requested a Saturday meeting with Ambassador Michalak to detail the GVN's desired environmental deliverables for the Prime Minister's upcoming visit to Washington. Two days earlier, Senior Vice-Minister Nguyen Cong Thanh had requested a meeting with the Ambassador to raise the same issues. Minister Pham, who will accompany the Prime Minister to the United States, stated that climate change was Vietnam's top environmental priority for the visit. Pham noted that Prime Minister Dung had called this issue "urgent" when directing him to seek the Saturday meeting. Both senior officials noted that they hoped to build upon earlier discussions with the Ambassador (Refs A, B, and C) to formulate a detailed environmental cooperation package focusing on climate change.

GVN Strongly Supports US-VN Climate Change Committee

¶3. (SBU) The GVN hoped to highlight climate change in any joint statement, while also detailing specific issues for potential cooperation. Pham enthusiastically proposed the idea of a new climate change subcommittee under the existing U.S.-Vietnam Joint Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (JCM), pursuant to the U.S.-Vietnam Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (Bilateral S&T Agreement), as had been discussed earlier by the Ambassador and Senior Vice-Minister Thanh (Note: Our interlocutors at the Ministry of Science and Technology, with whom we coordinate JCM activities, also embraced the proposal. Indeed, Pham wanted to go further and establish an independent committee pursuant to the Bilateral S&T Agreement. However, he found the idea of the subcommittee, co-chaired by the Embassy Environment, Science, Technology and Health Officer and a MONRE

representative, satisfactory. This would limit direct OES involvement, and no Washington resources should be required in managing this body. End Note.)

GVN Climate Change Wish List

¶4. (SBU) Pham and Thanh provided detailed lists of possible climate change cooperation, including: 1) hydro-meteorology; 2) disaster preparedness and response; 3) preparation of studies on impacts of climate change on different sectors (environment, economy, human health, food security); 4) technology transfer to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases; 5) climate change monitoring systems; and 6) additional adaptation resources. Thanh noted that these projects would support ongoing GVN initiatives developed with the assistance of the international community.

Additional Potential Environmental Deliverables

¶5. (SBU) As MONRE covered a wide-range of issues, Pham hoped to establish new or broader initiatives with a variety of U.S. entities. Noting his admiration for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which he had twice visited, Pham requested U.S. assistance to help Vietnam upgrade its environmental protection capability, especially hazardous waste management. Pham and Thanh additionally sought U.S. technical guidance to Vietnam's efforts to eliminate persistent organic pollutants (POPs), including dioxin. Pham thanked the Ambassador for the USD 3 million for dioxin remediation and health projects and requested additional support to continue to decontaminate various "hotspots." Thanh had told the Ambassador that MONRE had briefed the Prime Minister on recent Agent

HANOI 00000677 002 OF 002

Orange/dioxin developments and the Prime Minister planned to raise the issue during his visit. Pham also requested U.S. assistance to respond to oil spills in the East Sea and to assess Vietnam's mineral potential (described by Pham as a good opportunity for U.S. commercial ventures).

The Way Forward

¶6. (SBU) Ambassador Michalak promised to raise Pham's proposals with Washington officials in the context of U.S. preparation for the Prime Minister's visit and as part of a longer-term review of possible U.S.-Vietnam collaboration. While we did not have much time to agree upon a detailed climate change agenda prior to the trip, the United States would focus on identifying feasible targets for cooperation. Ambassador Michalak noted that USAID had just issued requests for proposals for health projects and for a new Agent Orange/dioxin coordinator using funding from the USD 3 million in ESF funds and stated that the two parties should highlight our ongoing progress on this issue. Though the decision on whether to draft a joint statement had not yet been reached, Ambassador Michalak suggested that the Embassy and MONRE work to develop language on climate change, dioxins, and general environmental assistance that could be included in such a document or form the basis for later discussions.

Comment

¶7. (SBU) It is not surprising that Vietnam's forward-thinking Prime Minister is focusing on climate change as a centerpiece of his visit to the United States. Vietnam is the Asian nation which would be most affected by a rise on sea levels, and the Prime Minister wishes to deepen cooperation with us as a technical leader on S&T issues. The GVN admires the U.S. "brand," particularly in the areas of environmental protection, high technology, and scientific research. We support the creation of a climate change subcommittee under the JCM, understanding that Mission Vietnam would manage that process. We also urge Washington agencies to consider possible channels for additional climate change cooperation with Vietnam. The GVN clearly has identified this area as a priority (Ref D) and, under the direction of the Prime Minister, has begun to move quickly to focus

on adaptation and mitigation responses. Working with the GVN on climate change allows the United States to join in ongoing international efforts spearheaded by the UN and World Bank, and deepen ties with an emerging partner in Southeast Asia.

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